

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A process for the production of chewable coated cores by hard panning of chewable cores in a coating pan or drum wherein a syrup containing at least one of a crystallizable polyol[[s)], a crystallizable sugar[[s)]] or mixtures thereof is intermittently sprayed over a rotating bed of the cores and the cores are dried between sprayings with a flow of air, said process comprising ~~characterized in that the~~ drying of the cores between sprayings ~~is controlled~~ by controlling effective parameters of the drying air ~~in such a way so as to intentionally leave~~ cause a substantial residual moisture to remain in the drying coating layer at the start of a subsequent spraying phase.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein said ~~drying air~~ parameters of the drying air are selected from the group consisting of air humidity, air temperature, air flow speed, air flow time, ~~and~~ air flow direction, ~~or a~~ and any combination thereof ~~any of these~~.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2, wherein said parameters comprises the relative humidity of said drying air at ~~the~~ an outlet of said pan or drum.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2 or 3, wherein said parameters comprises the temperature of said drying air at ~~the~~ an inlet of said pan or drum.

Claim 5 (Original) A process according to claim 3, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air when starting said subsequent spraying is higher than the basic relative humidity level.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~there are a large~~ number of coating cycles is performed, ~~and~~ each coating cycle comprises a syrup application phase, an optional pause phase and a drying phase.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 3, wherein the flow of drying air to said bed is stopped before the drying is completed and the relative humidity of the outlet air is 1-10 percentages [[, preferably more than 3 percentages, most preferably 4-8 percentages]]higher than its basic level.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 6, wherein the direction of the air during at least a part of said drying phases is direct ~~i.e.~~ with the air flowing from above the bed through the product.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains about 40 to 80% of the total weight of a polyol selected from the group consisting of xylitol, sorbitol, maltitol, ~~and~~ isomalt ~~or a~~ and mixtures thereof.

Claim 10 (Original) A process according to claim 9, wherein the polyol is xylitol.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 10, wherein the temperature of the bed of chewable cores is adjusted ~~raised~~ to a temperature of 25 to 45 °C[[, preferably 30 to 40 °C,]] for at least a part of the total coating procedure, and the drying during said part of the procedure is performed with air having an inlet temperature of 25 to 75 °C[[, preferably 30 to 65 °C]].

Claim 12 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the bed temperature is 33 to 40 °C.

Claim 13 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the inlet temperature is 40 to 50 °C.

Claim 14 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the coating syrup temperature is 40 to 80 °C.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains about 40 to 80 % of the total weight of a sugar selected from the group consisting of saccharose, fructose and glucose.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains 1 to 20% of gum ~~such as Gum Arabic~~ of the total weight.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 9, wherein the coating syrup ~~contains~~ comprises other polyols, flavors, pigments, special sweeteners, ~~and/or~~ insoluble additives or mixtures thereof.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains dissolved, ~~and/or~~ suspended or dissolved and suspended xylitol, sorbitol, lactitol maltitol, isomalt, ~~and/or~~ mannitol or mixtures thereof.

Claim 19 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating of the chewable cores is started by an initial sequence having a bed temperature lower than the bed temperature during the residual moisture retaining drying procedure.

Claim 20 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating of the chewable cores is finished by an end coating sequence having a bed temperature lower than the bed temperature during said residual moisture retaining drying procedure.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 19 or 20, wherein the direction of the flow of air during the initial coating, ~~and/or~~ the end coating or both coatings is reversed such that the air ☐ flows from below the bed through the product ☐.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended) A process according to Claim 2, wherein the direction of the air flow, the air flow speed, the air flow time, ~~and/or~~ the temperature of the air or any combination thereof is changed several times during the coating procedure.

Claim 23 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the cores are coated with syrup until a desired coating thickness is provided and the ~~fully~~ coated cores are tempered after the coating for a time sufficient to allow crystallization of the polyol[(s)] [[and/]or sugar[(s)]] in said coating to provide a crunchy hard coating.

Claim 24 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein said core comprises chewing gum.

Claim 25 (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air is more than 3 percentages higher than its basic level.

Claim 26 (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air is 4-8 percentages higher than its basic level.

Claim 27 (New) A process according to claim 11, wherein the temperature of the bed is adjusted to a temperature of from 30 to 40 °C and said inlet temperature is from 30 to 65 °C.

Claim 28 (New) A process according to claim 16 wherein the gum is Gum Arabic.

Claim 29 (New) A process for the production of chewable coated cores by hard panning comprising:

spraying a syrup containing at least one of a crystallizable polyol, a crystallizable sugar or mixtures thereof over a rotating bed of chewable cores in a coating pan or drum;

stopping said spraying of said rotating cores while continuing rotation;  
starting to dry said cores with a flow of air;  
controlling the drying of said rotating cores by controlling effective parameters of the drying air and by stopping said flow of drying air at a point when a substantial residual moisture content remains in the drying coating layer;  
starting a subsequent spraying phase by spraying said syrup onto the moisture containing layer of the previous spraying phase; and  
repeating the spraying and drying of said rotating cores until a predetermined coating has been provided.